

Qura'nic Standpoint over Extremism in Society

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Abstract:

Islam is a religion of peace and non-violence. Islam has preached from every aspect the lessons of tolerance and endurance. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him has been titled by Allah Almighty as “compassionate/Blessing for all worlds”. It is because of the highest moral values and character strength of Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him that in spite of the great oppositions and enmities, the Islam spread around the world. The greatest lesson of Islam is to follow the right path with patience while avoiding extremism. The specific objective of this research has been to analyze/bring forth the Qura'nic injunctions/stances regarding the extremism. In its methodology, this research has used the Qur'an as the main secondary data source, with a petite portion of literature. The discussions/findings of the study shows that the attitudes/ behaviours, personality traits/characteristics and practices like harshness, imbalances, inflexibility and extremism are undesirable according to the Qur'an. In light of the discussion/findings, few recommendations are made, which will help masses to live a nonviolent life based on the Qura'nic philosophy of peaceful co-existence i.e. to live rightly and let others live rightly. This work is expected to benefit Insha Allah not only the Muslims, but also the whole humanity.

1. Research Methodology:

It is a review and qualitative nature of research, which neither used numerical nor used interviews based data. The research is explanatory in nature; it has analyzed/cited 10 quotations from the Qur'an, which give understanding that how Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him forbid and dislike excessiveness, violence, imbalances and extremism. A few citations from the literature were also quoted. The arguments were used in advancing the Qura'nic stance regarding extremism. The quoted verses must have

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broader/greater meanings with dynamism; hence in this research the commentary has been made keeping in view the only/single objective of this research i.e. the “Qura’nic stance over extremism”.

2. Literature and Discussion:

The Extremism:

Extremism is any ideology which violates common moral standards. Extremism is often contrasted with moderation. The term extremism may be associated with person(s) who have different view(s) that are inconsistent with the existing norm(s). The term “extremism” is mostly used with reference to use or advocating violence against the will of society at large, hence it is also used to describe advocating/using violence to enforce the will of the social body e.g. a government or majority constituency. Those described as extremist would in general not accept that what they practice or advocate constitutes violence and would instead speak in terms of acts of "resistance “or militant action or the use of force.¹

Himmelman (1988) states that the act of labeling a person, group or action as extremist is sometimes claimed to be a technique to promote a political goal, specifically by governments desiring to defend the status quo, or political centrists. At best this characterization tells us nothing special regarding the people it labels; at worst it paints a false picture.² Coleman and Bartoli (n.d.) while explaining the concept of extremism said that it can be defined as activities, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies of a character far removed from the ordinary. Extremism is viewed as a plague. Thus extremism is understood, not a tactic, nor an ideology, rather as a pathological illness which feeds on the destruction of life. It is also understood as an emotional outlet for severe feelings stemming from the persistent experiences of oppression, insecurity, humiliation, resentment, loss, and rage, which are presumed to lead individuals and groups to adopt conflict engagement strategies which “fit” or feel consistent with these experiences. The lack of identity associated with extremists is the result of self-destructive self-hatred that leads to feelings of revenge toward life itself, and a compulsion to kill one’s own humanness.³

Arguments on Islam’s/Muslims’ Views Regarding Extremism:

In the following Para, few scholars’ views are quoted/cited regarding Islam’s and Muslims’ views regarding extremism, as follows:-

Lewis (2008) states that, Islamic jurisprudence does not allow terrorism (or extremism) at all; at no time did the Muslim jurist approve it, nor indeed is there any evidence of the use of it in Islamic tradition. Muslims are commanded not to kill women, children, or the aged, not to torture or otherwise ill-treat prisoners, to give fair warning of the opening of hostilities, and to honor agreements. There is no such (violence based) precedent and no authority in Islam.⁴ Halliday (2003) a British academic specialist on the Middle East, argues

that the Muslims consider attacks on civilians to be egregious violations of Islam's laws.⁵ Sells (2002) write that Muslims do not interpret Qura'nic verses as promoting warfare (and/or extremism); and that the phenomenon of radical interpretation of scripture by extremist groups is not unique to Islam.⁶

Ash-Shaikh (n.d.), the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, made an official statement post 9/11 that "the Islamic Shariah (legislation) does not sanction" such actions.⁷ Ibn Baz (n.d.) says that it is well-known to anyone with the slightest amount of common sense that hijacking planes and kidnapping embassy officials and similar acts are some of the greatest universal crimes that result in nothing but widespread corruption and destruction. It places such extreme hardships and injuries upon innocent people, the extent of which only Allah knows.⁸ The Chairman of the Pakistani Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, said in his address that those who were fighting in the name of implementing Shariah or Islamic law must first abide by these same laws e.g. as killing of minors is contrary to the teachings of Islam (The Times of India, 2009).⁹

Qura'nic Verses In-validating/Rebutting Extremism:

The whole of the Qur'an is a noble book, as it is the scripture revealed by Allah Almighty on his Prophet (of Islam) Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him; a few verses are selected from it for commentary on the subject study to understand that how Islam promote moderate attitude/behaviour, peace, non-violent environment and eliminate extremism from the whole humanity generally, and from believers' lives particularly. The selected verses are enlisted with the "subject specific" commentary/discussion made for this study's contextual scope, as follows:-

*I. There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Tâghût and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower.*¹⁰

In this verse it is being very clearly stated by Allah Almighty that there is no compulsion in religion; that the Muslims should not force the people (the non-Muslims) regarding accepting the religion Islam or its teachings; rather the accepting/admitting Islam became a matter of individual's free will; as Allah is the God of every one and he has shown the right path to everyone very openly; with the clear distinction between the desired/right path and the undesired/wrong path. Here, Islam discourages extremism for imposition of religious indoctrination.

*II. By the time, indeed, mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.*¹¹

These verses clearly states that Allah Almighty emphasize mankind to be believer and to do good deeds. For promotion of good, Allah Almighty says that

advise each other to truth (and to do good-deeds by oneself); and finally be patient, of the hardships one faces in shape of cruelties, oppositions, challenges etc. caused/created by the opponents (against the righteous ones) and to follow endurance. Here one can verily understand that Allah Almighty emphasizes the believers to be patient, which mean that they are directed/advised to avoid violence and extremism.

*III. And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made fair seeming to each people its own doings; then to their Lord is their return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do.*¹²

It is understandable to every sensible human being that insulting one's sacred can create violence (extremism); and Allah Almighty very clearly urged/ordered all believers not to insult/defame/abuse anyone's god; because everyone has extreme emotional/sentimental attachment to what they believe as god (that their god may even be untrue) so in response he/she/they can insult our true God i.e. Allah Almighty. This is the best example that Islam discourages extremism by every mean.

*IV. Because of that We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind.*¹³

Here in this verse Allah Almighty, without specification of religious affiliation/status of individual(s) forbids the killing of any innocent; and symbolically considered killing of one person as killing of whole humanity, the very disliked act by anyone (specifically by the believers). At other side, Allah Almighty, while encouraging the peace, tolerance, endurance and co-existence, termed/considered symbolically the lifesaving of one individual as of saving the lives of whole humanity. We know the fact that at present there are more than six billion human beings living on the face of earth, being created by Allah Almighty; how larger numbers of human beings has passed/died and how many will come/born, is in-imaginable/un-projectable, then the whole humanity is countless.

*V. The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off on the opposite sides, or be exiled from the land.*¹⁴

Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him dislike the act i.e. the waging of war (against them). The creating of mischief (which surely creates unrest, violence and extremism) is disliked to such an extent that the severe punishment is advised/ordered to be given to them who cause unrest,

mischievous, terrorism and who fight against Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him. This injunction is made by Allah Almighty in order to control/discourage the acts of violence/extremism, and to promote peace, stability and order in the society.

VI. *And do not mischief on the earth after it has been set in order.*¹⁵

Allah Almighty personally and his Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him dislike acutely the acts of extremism, mischief, violence, crime, as it is very clear in the verse which is composed of two parts; one part is the establishment of peace on earth, which shows that Islam desires peace as practice, and the other part of the verse shows that Allah Almighty forbids the acts creation of mischief. Hence, the peace is desirable by Islam and the mischief is undesirable. It also urges the believers/society to have a consistent struggle and a zest to establish peace on earth.

VII. *The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and wrongly rebel in the earth, for such there will be a painful torment.*¹⁶

This verse clarifies that Allah Almighty dislikes oppression, extremism, violence, indecency and imbalances on the part of the people. He Almighty warns such people, who so ever are the oppressors and rebellious, of the painful torment. It becomes a sort of advice and reminder to people to avoid i.e. not doing such acts, which disturbs the order of society and cause extremism.

VIII. *These are the limits ordained by Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits ordained by Allah, then such are the Zâlimûn (wrong-doers).*¹⁷

Allah Almighty has created limits for everything; as such we know that the crossing of limits creates extremism, imbalances, oppression etc. Allah warns about the limits created by Him Almighty for human kind. He Almighty urges us all to follow his limits in order to create a balance in the whole universe. We know that the limits have a balance and violation of limits cause extremism, which is undesirable by Allah Almighty and His Almighty's Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him.

IX. *So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it.*¹⁸

Here Allah Almighty makes the people conscious of their deeds that the wrong deeds are disliked and punishment will be given to the wrong-doers. While the good deeds are liked, and righteous/good-doers will be rewarded with great favourable rewards. We are told by Allah Almighty and His Prophets Peace Be Upon Them regarding that after worship to Allah Almighty, the great deeds are

they doing favour/good to others and to avoid harming others. The criterion for becoming good is that to benefit others and be harmless to others i.e. to avoid extremism.

*X. O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority.*¹⁹

As in order to establish the greater peace, order, integration, mechanism, balance, moderation, the Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him devised some rules/codes which are in the best interest of the society/people living on the face of earth; these rules/laws are urged to be implanted by the people “in authority” among us; Allah Almighty do urge us to be obedient to Him (Allah Almighty), to His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him and to the people “in authority” among us; it is, to be obedient and supportive to people who have the authority/are the rulers, which ensures establishment of an integrated, just, peaceful, law and order based equitable society. Allah Almighty further says in Qur'an that if some disparity/difference occurs among you on any matter, that matter should be referred to Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him i.e. now to Qur'an and Sunnah.²⁰ Allah Almighty continues to say in Qur'an that whosoever remain obedient to Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, he/she/they will be treated among the *Anbia* [Prophets Peace Be Upon Them], *Siddiqeen* [truthful people], *Shuhada* [martyrs- those who sacrifice their lives in way of righteousness] and *Saaliheen* [good doers/righteous].²¹

3. Conclusion:

From the above commentary/discussion of the Qura'nic verses and literature cited, it can be concluded that the Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, sacrifice, ethics, belief, viable social system, care, patience and space for others etc. which puts three tier responsibility i.e. over individual, society and state to maintain peace and remove extremism from all aspects of life i.e. personal and social (in relation to others). Islam promises great rewards to the believers who do express/exercise comparatively more patience. Islam discourages extremism and promotes a balanced approach/society. So, by any way, understanding, claiming, saying, exposing, depicting or writing that Islam support any radical, extremist, oppressive thinking, teachings or practices is totally invalid, wrong and based on prejudice, which should be unlearned. Hence it is being concluded from the above quoted verses that the extremism is an act which is strongly discouraged by Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, because of its known reason that extremism disturbs the order, peace and integration of the society. The “right deeds/paths” and “wrong deeds/paths” are made clear by Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, and everyone will surely meet their actual Lord (Allah Almighty) with accountability/being answerable for all of his/her/their deeds. So, any image/conception/depiction being held/projected/promoted against Islam that it teaches/promotes Permits/ favours

extremism is hence proven as totally wrong/baseless/illogical. Islam promotes a just, safe, peaceful, moderate, balanced human society around the globe.

4. Recommendations:

Tolerance is the key to peaceful co-existence, therefore, conflict resolution, tolerance and peace based contents may be included in the curriculum of both the governmental, private and as well as in the religious education systems.

Islam should be studied, expressed and preached through its basic and true sources, i.e. Qur'an and Sunnah of Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him.

The true Islamic spirit and teachings should be revived, and the misconceptions should be removed/controlled.

The un-authorized/un-authenticated teachings/expressions of Islam which most often results in extremism should be controlled/rooted out.

The Islamic teachings/ethics shall be made part of education and the elements of patience, tolerance, forgiveness, sacrifice, justice and fear of God shall be promoted in the society.

The enemies of Islam are prevailing in Pakistan and all around the world- their attacks on Islam in form of wrong/misinterpretation, propaganda, wrong expression (who teach Islam- but are the real enemies of Islam) may not be left for propagation.

The Islamic reforms are required so that the true Islamic teachings may be restored. The Qur'an and the Sunnah of Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him may be restored clearly separated/ demarcated from the personal opinions of the individuals, so that it may become easy for people to follow the true Islam.

The Islamic teachings should be made available for people who want to study and understand Islam.

The social evils among Muslims worsening their image, which ultimately negatively affect the image of Islam, should be controlled,

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